

REMARKS

Reexamination and reconsideration of the claims 1-6 and 18 are respectfully requested. Applicants acknowledge the allowance of claims 17, 19, and 20 with appreciation. The Examiner's recognition of allowable subject matter in claims 2-4 is also acknowledged with appreciation. Additionally, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136(a) is included herewith. Furthermore, Applicants are requesting a telephone interview after the Examiner reviews this reply to discuss the claims.

Claims 1, 5, 6 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. sec. 102(e) applying U.S. Pat. No. 5,926,596 ('596). For a reference to be applicable under sec. 102(e), the reference must, *inter alia*, disclose each and every feature of the claimed invention.

The '596 patent discloses an overmolded alignment ferrule 10 that requires an alignment block 12 having an overmolded body portion 14. Specifically, the '596 patent requires that a portion of alignment block 12 extends past overmolded body portion 14, thereby forming a parting line between portions 12,14 that is disposed transversely to the optical fiber channels 34,54. See Figs. 4 and 5 of the '596 patent and Col. 5, ll. 14-22. For a reference to be applicable under sec. 102(e), it must at least disclose each and every feature of the claimed inventions.

The amendment of claims 1 and 18 is not an admission that the art of record teaches, discloses, or suggests the features of the claims. Claim 1 recites a ferrule including at least one optical fiber bore associated with a front surface and a rear surface of the ferrule, first and second body portions extending at least partially between the surfaces and having respective widths, a juncture of the body portions having an interface in the form of a parting line, the parting line and the optical fiber bore extending longitudinally at least partially between the front surface and the rear surface, and the parting line defining an offset of at least about 50 microns between the first

and second body portions.

It is respectfully submitted that at least each and every feature of claim 1 is not disclosed by the '596 patent. Alignment ferrule 10 of the '596 patent has a front flat face 16 and a rear face 44 relative to the fiber hole channels 34. Additionally, alignment ferrule 10 has a sole parting line (where the two portions 12,14 join as shown in the Figs.) formed between alignment block 12 and overmolded body portion 14. The '596 patent requires that the parting line is disposed transversely to the fiber channels 34,54. See Figs. 4 and 5 of the '596 patent and Col. 5, ll. 14-20. Furthermore, since the remainder of the alignment block 12 is overmolded this transversely disposed parting line is the sole parting line of alignment ferrule 10.

On the other hand, the claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, that the parting line and the optical fiber bore extend longitudinally between at least a portion of the front surface and the rear surface of the ferrule. See Fig. 1 of the present invention. Disposing the parting line in the manner claimed provides advantages such as decreasing the machining required for the injection mold and maintaining precision tolerances on only one portion of the ferrule. For at least these reasons, withdrawal of the sec. 102(e) rejection of claims 1, 5, and 6 is warranted and is respectfully requested.

Additionally, for similar reasons it is respectfully submitted that at least each and every element of claim 18 is not disclosed by the '596 patent. Claim 18 recites a ferrule including at least one optical fiber bore extending from a front surface to a rear surface of the ferrule, a shaft portion defining exterior surfaces of the ferrule at least partially extend longitudinally between the front and rear surfaces, and a width transition extending longitudinally along a portion of the ferrule shaft portion, the width transition comprising a width offset. Thus, for at least the above stated reasons, withdrawal

of the sec. 102(e) rejection of claim 18 is warranted and is respectfully requested.

No new fees are believed due in connection with this Reply. If any fees are due in connection with this Reply, please charge any fees, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number 19-2167.

Allowance of all pending claims is believed to be warranted and is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is welcomed to telephone the undersigned to discuss the merits of this patent application.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (twice amended) A ferrule comprising:
at least one optical fiber bore associated with a front surface and a rear surface of said ferrule;
first and second body portions extending at least partially between said surfaces and having respective widths, a juncture of said body portions comprising an interface in the form of a parting line, said parting line and said optical fiber bore extending longitudinally at least partially between said front surface and said rear surface, and said parting line defining an offset of at least about 50 microns between said first and second body portions.

18. (amended) A ferrule comprising:
at least one optical fiber bore extending from a front surface to a rear surface of said ferrule;
a shaft portion defining exterior surfaces of said ferrule, said exterior surfaces at least partially extending longitudinally between said front and rear surfaces; and
a width transition, said width transition extending longitudinally along a portion of [interposed between said exterior surfaces of] said ferrule shaft portion, said width transition comprising a width offset.